

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 IO-14 ISO-00 AF-10 EUR-25 CU-04 SIL-01 LAB-06

HEW-08 ACDA-19 OPR-02 A-01 SY-03 OC-06 CCO-00 EB-11

COME-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 OMB-01 TRSE-00 DRC-01 /199 W
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P R 291620Z MAR 74

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7162

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

USINT DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

USMISSION GENEVA

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USINT BAGHDAD

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 3731

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (P A R A 2)

GENEVA FOR MEPC DEL

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS PINT LE

SUBJECT: LEBANESE INTERNAL SITUATION

REF: BEIRUT 3348

SUMMARY: INTERNAL SITUATION REMAINS UPSET AND CON-
FUSSED. STUDENT AND WORKER DEMONSTRATIONS HAVE MARKED
PAST WEEK IN MAJOR CITIES WITH VIOLENT CLASHES BE-
TWEEN DEMONSTRATORS AND SECURITY FORCES IN TRIPOLI,
SIDON AND TYRE BUT RELATIVE RESTRAINT ON BOTH SIDES
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IN BEIRUT. UNIVERSITIES REMAIN CLOSED AS DO SOME

SECONDARY SCHOOLS, AND STUDENT-ADMINISTRATION CONFRONTATION AT AUB SHOWS NO SIGN OF RESOLUTION. LEBANESE CONFEDERATION OF WORKERS HAS ISSUED UNANIMOUS APPEAL FOR OPEN-ENDED, NATION-WIDE GENERAL STRIKE STARTING APRIL 2 AND STUDENTS APPARENTLY INTEND CONTINUE THEIR STRIKE AND DEMONSTRATIONS BUT WITHOUT CLEAR IDEA AS TO TACTICS. END SUMMARY

1. DEMONSTRATION ORGANIZED MARCH 27 BY LEFT-WING UNION ELEMENTS, AND SOME LEFT-WING POLITICAL GROUPS AND STUDENTS DREW SOME 15,000 PERSONS FOR MARCH THROUGH CENTER OF BEIRUT TO NATIONAL ASSEMBLY BUILDING WHERE SPEECHES MADE AND CROWD BROKE UP. SECURITY FORCES DID NOT TRY BLOCK MARCH AND CROWD WAS VERY PEACEFUL. SPEECHES EMPHASIZED WORKER AND STUDENT DEMANDS, LEFT-WING DEDICATION TO BOTH CAUSES, AND CRITICISM OF PRESENT GOVERNMENT.

2. THROUGHOUT WEEK STRIKE CONTINUED AT LEBANESE UNIVERSITY, ARAB UNIVERSITY, BEIRUT UNIVERSITY COLLEGE AND AMERICAN UNIVERSITY, WITH FRENCH AND ARMENIAN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS JOINING IN FOR LAST PART OF WEEK. IN SIDON, TYRE AND TRIPOLI THERE WERE STUDENT-SECURITY FORCE CLASHES, CONSIDERABLE DAMAGE DONE BY STUDENTS AND OTHER DEMONSTRATORS TO GOVERNMENT AND MUNICIPAL INSTALLATIONS, AND NUMEROUS ARRESTS MADE. IN BEIRUT THERE WERE MINOR DEMONSTRATIONS PLUS LARGE PEACEFUL ONE ON MARCH 28 WHICH GROUPED PERHAPS 5,000 UNIVERSITY AND SECONDARY STUDENTS. WHILE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM BADLY IN NEED OF OVERHAUL, MOST STUDENT DEMANDS ARE VERY VAGUE AND/OR IMPOSSIBLE OF RAPID IMPLEMENTATION.

3. AT AMERICAN UNIVERSITY, STUDENTS STILL IN CONTROL OF CAMPUS AND ALTHOUGH THEY HAVE REDUCED ORIGINAL DEMANDS TO ONE, I.E., PLACE ON SCHOLARSHIP AWARD COMMITTEE, THEY REFUSE CALL OFF STRIKE AND OCCUPATION OF BLDGS UNTIL DEMAND IS MET. UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATION WITH OVERWHELMING SUPPORT OF FACULTY SENATE TAKES POSITION THAT IT WILL NOT CONSIDER STUDENT DEMANDS UNTIL STRIKE AND OCCUPATION ENDED. ADMINISTRATION HAS ISSUED STATEMENT
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THAT SEMESTER CANNOT BE COMPLETED DUE TO EXCESSIVE NUMBER LOST CLASSES.

4. AT MEETING MARCH 28, SOME 200 MEMBERS OF LEBANESE GENERAL CONFEDERATION OF LABOR DECIDED ON GENERAL STRIKE WITH NO CUT-OFF DATE, BEGINNING APRIL 2. RIGHT-WING LEADERS WHO HAD ORIGINALLY OPPOSED STRIKE DEMAND APPARENTLY DECIDED CHANGE POSITION RATHER THAN RISK LOSING RANK-

AND-FILE SUPPORT TO LEFT-WING MILITANTS WHO ORGANIZED MARCH 27 DEMONSTRATION. FACT THAT CONFEDERATION ELECTIONS WILL BE HELD APRIL 10 IS UPPERMOST ON MINDS BOTH LEFT-AND RIGHT-WING LABOR LEADERS. THEIR DEMANDS ON GOL ARE SEVERAL BUT OF RELATIVELY MINOR NATURE. MAIN CAUSE OF UNREST APPEARS BE INFLATION AND GOL INABILITY CONTROL PRICES.

5. VARIOUS POLITICAL LEADERS CONTINUE MEET AND MANEUVER IN EFFORT BRING ABOUT CHANGE IN PRESENT CABINET OF PRIME MINISTER SOLH. THERE IS WIDE AGREEMENT ON DESIRABILITY FOR CHANGE BUT FACT THAT 22 OF 99 DEPUTIES HAVE VESTED INTEREST IN STATUS QUO SINCE THEY ARE CABINET MINISTERS, AND FACT THAT AGREEMENT ON SUCCESSOR CABINET VERY DIFFICULT, HAVE SERVED EASE PRESSURE ON PRESIDENT FRANGIE TO MAKE CHANGE. CRITICAL POINT ON THIS ISSUE LIKELY COME AT END OF PRESENT ASSEMBLY DEBATE ON 1974 BUDGET.

6. COMMENT: EVEN THOUGH LEVEL OF VIOLENCE HAS ABATED, GOL HAS DONE REMARKABLY LITTLE TO TRY AND STOP OR EVEN ALLEVIATE WIDESPREAD PROTEST, PERHAPS IN RECOGNITION OF ITS VERY LIMITED ABILITIES AND MAGNITUDE OF BASIC PROBLEMS. CONTINUATION OF UNREST WITHOUT SIGN OF STOPPING IS DESTROYING WHAT CREDIT REMAINS TO SOLH CABINET AND IS ALSO ERODING PRESTIGE OF PRESIDENT. GODLEY

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